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TAGS: PGOV CH
SUBJECT: PARTY PLENUM IN MID-OCTOBER

REF: FBIS CPP20060912715031

CLASSIFIED BY: POLITICAL INTERNAL UNIT CHIEF SUSAN THORNTON,
REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) THIS YEAR'S COMMUNIST PARTY PLENUM IS LIKELY TO BE HELD IN MID-OCTOBER, BASED ON A CREDIBLE HONG KONG MEDIA REPORT AND THE PRC'S POSTPONEMENT OF SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL'S VISIT TO BEIJING, SCHEDULED FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9. ACCORDING TO THE SEPTEMBER 12 WEN WEI PO, A PRC-OWNED HONG KONG NEWSPAPER THAT HAS OFTEN SERVED AS THE MAINLAND'S MOUTHPIECE, THE PLENUM IS LIKELY TO START IN MID-OCTOBER. MEANWHILE, ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS AND THE CHINESE EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, NO SENIOR PRC OFFICIALS WILL BE AVAILABLE TO MEET WITH SENATOR HAGEL THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9 BECAUSE OF AN "IMPORTANT PARTY MEETING." ALTHOUGH THE POLITBURO ANNOUNCED IN JULY THAT THE PLENUM WOULD BE HELD IN OCTOBER, THE WEN WEI PO PIECE AND THE POSTPONEMENT OF SENATOR HAGEL'S TRIP ARE THE FIRST CREDIBLE INDICATIONS OF THE MEETING'S ACTUAL DATES. THE SPECIFIC DATES SHOULD BE ANNOUNCED OFFICIALLY AFTER THE NEXT POLITBURO MEETING IN LATE SEPTEMBER. END SUMMARY.

HONG KONG MEDIA SPECULATION ON PLENUM DATES

¶2. (C) THE PRC-OWNED HONG KONG NEWSPAPER, WEN WEI PO, WHICH HAS OFTEN SERVED AS THE MAINLAND'S MOUTHPIECE, REPORTED ON SEPTEMBER 12 THAT THE SIXTH PLENARY SESSION OF THE 16TH CPC CENTRAL COMMITTEE IS EXPECTED TO OPEN IN MID-OCTOBER, AFTER THE WEEK-LONG NATIONAL DAY HOLIDAYS THAT BEGIN ON OCTOBER 1. THE WEN WEI PO PIECE FURTHER HINTED THAT THE PLENUM WOULD NOT BEGIN BEFORE OCTOBER 11, DUE TO THE PLANS OF ZENG PEIYAN, VICE PREMIER AND POLITBURO MEMBER, TO ATTEND A CONFERENCE IN SHENYANG OCTOBER 8-10. THIS REPORT IS SIGNIFICANT, BASED ON WEN WEI PO'S WELL-KNOWN POSITION AS A MAINLAND MOUTHPIECE, AND ITS PAST PRACTICE OF "LEAKING" NEWS OF IMPORTANT PARTY EVENTS IN ADVANCE.

POSTPONEMENT OF SENATOR HAGEL'S TRIP

¶3. (C) MEANWHILE, CHINESE EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON ON SEPTEMBER 12 TOLD SENATOR CHUCK HAGEL'S OFFICE THAT THE SENATOR SHOULD RESCHEDULE HIS VISIT TO BEIJING, PLANNED FOR THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9, BECAUSE NO SENIOR PRC OFFICIALS WOULD BE AVAILABLE DUE TO A "PARTY MEETING." SEPARATELY, A STAFFER ON THE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE TOLD POLOFF TODAY THAT "AN IMPORTANT PARTY MEETING THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9" PRECLUDES SENIOR CHINESE OFFICIALS FROM MEETING WITH HAGEL.

...MEANS PLENUM WEEK OF OCTOBER 9

¶4. (C) THESE TWO EVENTS SUGGEST THE PLENUM IS LIKELY TO BEGIN SOMETIME THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 9, FOLLOWING THE WEEK-LONG NATIONAL HOLIDAY THAT BEGINS ON OCTOBER 1. THE POLITBURO ANNOUNCED IN JULY THAT THE PLENUM WOULD BE HELD THIS OCTOBER, WITH A FOCUS ON BUILDING A "HARMONIOUS SOCIETY," BUT USUALLY DOES NOT SPECIFY DATES UNTIL SHORTLY BEFORE THE PLENUM. BASED ON PAST PRACTICE, THE SPECIFIC DATES WILL BE ANNOUNCED OFFICIALLY AFTER THE NEXT POLITBURO MEETING IN LATE SEPTEMBER. MEDIA CONTACTS HAVE SPECULATED THAT THIS YEAR'S PLENUM WILL LAST 3-4 DAYS.

RANDT